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ABSTRACT

To inform discussions of revising the curriculum of junior secondary schools in Western Samoa, a series of structured observations of classrooms was conducted. Data from 145 classes, covering Business/Commercial Studies, English Home Economics, Manual Arts, Mathematics, Samoan Studies, Science and Social Science, were analyzed. With the exception of Samoan Studies and Manual Arts, all classes were taught in English. Results show that teachers employed a mixing approach to bilingual teaching, in which both languages are used concurrently in all subject areas. Mixing was also a feature of student language use, and classes in which English was used exclusively by the students had much higher levels of language mixing than those in which students used only Samoan. Disadvantages to the use of mixing as a method of bilingual education are addressed. (JP)

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LANGUAGE USE IN CLASSROOMS IN WESTERN SAMOAN SCHOOLS[1]

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ABSTRACT

This article describes the results of a study of classroom use of English and Samoan in Junior Secondary School classrooms in Western Samoa.
The study was commissioned by the Secondary Teacher's College of Western Samoa with a view to guiding it in the important decisions it had to make about the appropriate language of instruction for the various subjects of the curriculum. 145 classroom observations are utilised to describe and analyse the general pattern of English-Samoan mixing and preferred usage. Whilst only a preliminary study it nevertheless points to significant pedagogical implications of the patterning of instructional and interactional language use which might have a broader applicability across Pacific education systems.

INTRODUCTION

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All nations face the dilemma of the appropriate degree of emphasis to allocate in education to the modern demands of economy and society with those of tradition and distinctiveness. This is particularly acute for societies which are recently independent and are attempting to forge a secure national cultural identity while developing in their citizens the skills and competencies to facilitate economic progress. In cases such as that typified by the small Pacific Island Nation of Western Samoa there is a linguistic parallel to this broader issue. This is the extent to which national

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progress through education cultivates the national language or perpetuates the dominance of the former colonial and more prestigious language, in this case English. The constitution of Western Samoa declares the nation to be officially bilingual; the education system, however, is dominated by English. However, in common with other Pacific Island States, the past ten years have seen a clear pattern of enhancing the status of the indigenous language.(Lo Bianco and Wilson 1988)

At the same time education systems serve the practical imperatives of imparting to the future generations the skills, knowledge and attitudes which the society values. In this respect, the language question becomes one of utilitarian adoption of the most effective and efficient means of imparting the general curriculum. English has long had an important role in Samoan education and, for many Samoans, education itself is equated with learning to speak English (Ma'ia'i 1957 quoted in Baldauf 1990). Before independence from New Zealand in 1962, government schools treated Samoan as a bridge to English rather than as an acceptable medium of instruction in its own right. Since independence, there has been a slow growth towards according a more prominent place to Samoan; in 1966 a Samoan language and customs syllabus was introduced (Baldauf 1990:272) and subsequently Samoan was introduced as the language of instruction in the manual arts syllabus of the junior secondary schools. All other areas of the curriculum at this level are meant to be taught in English. The prevailing practice is, however, much more complex, and, depending on the particular school, its locality and the training of the teachers concerned a great deal of language mixing occurs. This practice is also influenced by the greater command of Samoan of many children requiring explanatory information to be provided in that language.

Issues

In the process of revising the curriculum of the junior secondary schools from the mid-1980's, the question of the appropriate

language of instruction arose. To inform these discussions and to assist in obtaining a more objective view of the actual practice in these schools, it was decided to conduct a series of structured observations of classrooms. Practical considerations precluded the use of long term ethnographic methodologies, and the policy oriented nature of the request dictated the extensive involvement of the principals of the schools of teachers in training and those participating in in-service programs and the curriculum writers and reviewers, many of whom were foreign aid experts on loan to the local education authorities.

METHODOLOGY

In his detailed review of methodological issues in classroom research, Long (1983) identifies and analyses the two broad approaches which have characterised the field; interaction analysis and anthropological observation. Interaction analysis involves the use of instruments to standardise data, its collection and analysis. Anthropological observation covers the application to education, and in particular to school and classroom research, of the methods of ethnography. Both approaches encompass a wide number of possible specific techniques.

Long points out the weaknesses and strengths of the various techniques incorporated under either approach and argues that;

> a combination of methods plus some modification in commonly used research designs is necessary if the field is to achieve its ultimate goal of testing a theory of of second language acquistion with the aid of formal instruction.
>
> (Long 1983:27)

Ethnography consists of detailed, rich systematic, though often unstructured observation of phenomena. Although deriving primarily from the fieldwork of anthropology, ethnographic approaches are now applied to many areas of contemporary urban

life as well. Because ethnography is fundamentally hypothesis-generating, rather than hypothesis-testing, and because it usually focuses on small *n*-size, it was decided that interaction analysis would be preferred as the approach to the classroom observations in the present study. Practical considerations of time and other constraints also militated against other more qualitative approaches.

There are many instruments available for standardising observations about classroom behaviour. These vary in their scoring techniques, the degree of inference the researcher is required to make in transposing the observed behaviour to one of the categories on the instrument, as well as in the number, type and quality of the categories they contain. It was decided to adapt an interaction instrument to the task of assessing the pattern of English-Samoan language use in classrooms due to the relative ease of conducting this work and the potential it offered for a large number of cases to be studied. The use of "triangulation" further ensured the dependability of the results and lowered the risk of observer error.

An adaptation of the Jarvis and Adams (1979) instrument was adopted as its ease of operation suited the circumstances under which the research was undertaken. (See also Lo Bianco 1987) The instrument codes exchanges in class with real time recording of interactions. Every 5 minutes the dominant event of linguistic behaviour of the teacher and the students was scored against the language choice (Samoan/English) and a number of functions pre-coded onto the instrument. (See Table 1) The codings were then converted to percentages of time devoted to each language and to each function. Observer training included the possibility of additional observations about classroom interactions and salient events and space for these observations was allowed on the coding sheets.

Coding was carried out by teacher trainees and teachers on in-service projects at the Secondary Teachers College of Western Samoa in Apia. Training sessions in the use of the instrument were run prior to the commencement of the data collection process. The

work was supervised by Ms. Tili Afasamaga, principal of the STC and by Dr. Ruth Gerlach, Senior Lecturer at the STC.

The data were collected from 149 classes in the Junior Secondary Schools of Western Samoa during three weeks in April-May of 1987. Of the 149 classes investigated, only 145 were considered suitable for analysis. The classes covered eight different subject areas: Business/Commercial Studies, English Home Economics, Manual Arts, Mathematics, Samoan Studies, Science and Social Science. The official language of instruction in all of

Teacher language functions	Student language functions
Student behaviour management	responding to teacher
praising students	expressing self in group discussion
encouraging	asking teacher to clarify a point
/acknowledging feelings	asking permission
slight reprimand	
Presentation of lessons	
asking questions	
explaining	
giving instructions/directions	
Translation	
asking questions	
explaining	
giving instructions	
Other	
joking	
swearing	
responding to students' questions/comments	
justifying authority	

Table 1 Language functions coded

these subject areas is English, with the exception of Samoan Studies and Manual Arts which are officially intended to be taught in Samoan. The English language subjects all use English language materials and are examined in English. Each lesson was of forty minutes duration.

The coding system used proved to have one shortcoming in that it was not possible to determine patterns of interaction from the coding sheets alone. As a result, it was impossible to tell whether or not the choice of language in many instances was conditioned by the preceding utterance. With this limitation in mind, however, the coding sheets adequately demonstrate language choice in absolute terms and by function.

INPUT AND INTERACTION

Language use in classrooms and speech modification patterns are two of the nine research themes and topics which emerge from an analysis of second language acquisition research around the world in recent years (NLIA 1990). The former derives from classroom oriented research and, among other areas, addresses itself to roles and patterns of interaction, and the relationships among different elements, eg task and activity types which promote successful interactions and comprehensible input of linguistic data to learners. Speech modification patterns address the ways in which learners seek comprehensible input, the nature of that input, how learners process the input which is addressed to them or which they generate, the role played in the acquisition of the second language by the input and the discourse roles and functions performed by different speakers, native and non-native.

The Western Samoan teacher educators and the curriculum advisers along with the foreign aid experts were attempting to re-invigorate practice in the junior secondary schools along more participatory lines. They stressed a more communicative approach to the language classrooms as the linguistic correlate of this general pedagogical change. In bilingual classrooms, as Wong-Fillmore (1982) has shown, instructional language performs two crucial

roles, it is both message-conveying language and language modelling the target language. Teacher-centred practice has the likely advantage of modelling correct forms of the target language but reduces the linguistic space available for the learners. Conversely student-centred practice can have the opposite problems and potential.

The nature and quality of input is held by many researchers to be a, or even the, key variable in language acquisition (Burt and Dulay 1981, Krashen 1981,1982, Krashen and Terrell 1983; Wagner-Gough and Hatch 1975, Wong Fillmore 1982) and comprehensible input is one of the more important factors in promoting second language acquisition. If input is to be comprehensible, teaching needs to be exclusively in the target language and be accompanied by situational stimuli which assist the understanding of the target language message.

Krashen (1981,1982) has put forward an interrelated set of hypotheses based on a distinction between conscious learning through formal study, which he calls Acquisition, and informal, naturalistic learning, which he calls Learning. According to Krashen, Acquisition generates utterances in the target language whereas Learning yields more consciously monitored and formalised performance. A central concept in Krashen's theory is the input hypothesis, which holds that language is acquired when the acquirer understands messages which are a little beyond his/her current level of proficiency.

The Western Samoan authorities sought to obtain a picture of actual practice in their junior secondary schools in order to explore the practical effect of views such as those put forward by the input theorists. The junior secondary schools are a relatively new creation, expressing the social need both to diversify educational offerings away from the previously narrow and early split between a technical stream for the majority, and an academic stream for the minority, and at the same time to advance the educational prospects of the non-urban majority. A practical effect of their creation was the serious problem of teacher shortages, filled by upgrading primary teachers and also by retraining.

Another effect was linguistic; teachers trained to teach only in English found themselves teaching older children who in most cases were stronger in Samoan in a curriculum increasingly exhorting them to adopt a practice which was less teacher centred and, in language classrooms, more communicatively oriented.

The observer's commentaries and the triangulation process, in which a second observer, the teacher and selected students commented on the observations, enrich the data and assist its interpretation. The following results represent the most extensive observation of classroom interactions in Samoan schools and, despite the necessarily preliminary nature of the research, have already been incorporated into curriculum and language planning there.

RESULTS

It is clear from the results that the policy of using English in some areas of the curriculum and Samoan in others is not upheld in practice. Samoan teachers employ a mixing approach (McLaughlin 1978) to bilingual teaching, in which both languages are used concurrently in all subject areas. This approach involves

Subject	English	Samoan	p=
Commerce/Business Studies	61.529	38.426	.000
English	53.432	46.591	.118
Mathematics	46.968	52.977	.148
Home Economics	44.063	55.928	.015
Social Science	44.144	55.926	.011
Science	39.903	61.280	.000
Manual Arts	36.420	63.520	.000
Samoan	3.883	96.111	.000
Total	41.154	58.845	.000

Table 2 *Total language use by subject – % of time spent*

considerable translation of material already expressed in the other language.

Table 2 demonstrates that the mixing approach is spread across the curriculum and that there are no subjects which are taught monolingually. In almost all subjects, Samoan is more frequent than English as a language of instruction, and where this occurs, the difference in language use is significant at about the 1% level. In English and Mathematics classes, however, the preponderance of Samoan is not statistically significant. The two exceptions to Samoan dominance as the language of instruction are English (53.432% English language) and Commerce (61.529% English).

Teachers use large amounts of Samoan to conduct their lessons in the English language areas of the curriculum. (See Table 3.) It is, however, not just in the English medium classes than mixing is found. Language mixing is so much a feature of the educational practice of Samoan teachers that it is found even in the native language areas of the curriculum, such as Manual Arts and Samoan language and culture. Samoan is, however,

Subject	English	Samoan	Total	p =
Commerce/Business Studies	46.343	34.947	81.290	.193
English	40.709	38.515	79.224	.749
Home Economics	35.930	42.103	78.033	.435
Mathematics	35.653	40.257	75.932	.286
Social Science	34.626	43.257	77.872	.050
Science	30.058	46.732	76.789	.003
Manual Arts	29.864	49.676	79.539	.002
Samoan	3.479	64.596	68.075	.000
Total	31.942	45.013	76.956	.007

Table 3 Teacher language use by subject – % of time spent

exceptional in that only 3.479% of class time is devoted to English. Raw scores for Samoan vary from 0 to 12.499% of interactions. The three Samoan classes and the Manual Arts class which scored 0 for English were the only monolingual classes coded for either language. The other Manual Arts classes which are officially taught in Samoan showed considerable use of English and there was only one Samoan only class coded.

Language mixing is not only a feature of teacher language use but also of student language use. In only nine of the 145 classes coded did students not use Samoan, and five of these were English classes (See Table 4). The remaining four occurred in Commerce (1 class), Mathematics (1 class) and science (1 class). There were also ten classes coded as Samoan only classes for student language use. Of these four were classes in Samoan as a subject. The other five classes were distributed among Manual Arts (1 class), Mathematics (4 classes), Social Science (1 class) and Science (1 class).

Subject	English	Samoan	Total	p =
Commerce/Business Studies	15.186	3.479	18.666	.003
English	12.723	8.076	20.799	.196
Mathematics	11.315	12.669	24.013	.720
Social Science	9.528	12.669	22.198	.390
Science	9.845	14.549	24.394	.208
Home Economics	8.133	13.825	21.957	.118
Manual Arts	6.557	13.845	20.401	.037
Samoan	0.403	31.515	31.919	.000
Total	9.211	13.832	23.043	.215

Table 4 *Student language use by subject – % of time spent*

Function	English	Samoan	Total	p =
Student behaviour management				
praising students	2.167	2.625	4.792	.490
encouraging/ acknowledging feelings	3.116	3.640	6.756	.431
slight reprimand	1.033	2.322	3.355	.076
total	6.316	8.580	14.903	.007
Presentation of lessons				
asking questions	4.992	6.133	10.125	.109
explaining	6.127	6.723	12.850	.374
giving instructions/ directions	3.060	4.164	7.224	.079
total	14.270	17.020	31.290	.000
Translation				
asking questions	2.752	3.522	6.274	.258
explaining	2.161	4.177	6.333	.006
giving instructions	2.179	3.262	5.441	.125
total	7.092	10.961	18.054	.000
Other				
joking	0.806	2.106	2.912	.021
swearing	0.486	1.387	1.873	.034
responding to students' questions/comments	2.595	4.289	6.884	.008
justifying authority	0.387	0.662	1.049	.000
total	4.265	8.445	12.528	.000
Total teacher language	31.943	45.013	76.956	.141

Table 5 *Teacher language use – % of time spent*

In all classes in which students used Samoan only, there was a low level of English use by the teacher. In all cases the use of English occupied less that 13% of class time. This would be expected in classes in which Samoan was the official language of instruction, but the data indicates that some 'officially' English classes are being taught almost exclusively in Samoan. One science class was in fact coded for 96% Samoan language use.

Classes in which English is used exclusively by the students have much higher levels of language mixing than those in which students use only Samoan. These classes mostly use 23–31% Samoan, although one class uses as much as 45% Samoan and one as little as 16%. In the classes where English was used by students, Samoan is used for translation of English lesson material, but its use is restricted in other domains. Moreover, these students use

Function	English	Samoan	Total	p =
responding to teacher	4.820	6.151	10.971	.028
expressing self in group discussion	1.826	2.788	4.614	.092
asking permission	1.078	1.858	2.926	.200
asking teacher to clarify a point	1.487	3.036	4.523	.013
Total student language	9.211	13.832	23.043	.000

Table 6 Student language use – % of time spent

Qualification	English	Samoan	p =
Primary Teachers Certificate	31.401	46.571	.002
Secondary Teachers Certificate	35.297	41.537	.121
Overseas Degree or Diploma[2]	44.348	31.214	.005
p =	.009	.003	

Table 7 Teacher qualification and language use

English primarily to respond to the teacher and do not tend to initiate interaction in English.

Table 5 shows that at there is no function in which English dominates Samoan. Samoan is used for presentation of lessons and for student behaviour management as well as for translation. This demonstrates that, in these classes, Samoan is functioning quite fully as a language of instruction and is not used solely to explain English language instruction.

It can also bee seen in Table 5 that a large proportion of the lesson material which is presented in English is later translated into Samoan. A considerable amount of material is also presented in Samoan and later translated into English. There remains only a small amount of lesson material which students must comprehend in English in order to understand the content of the lesson. The language used in presenting lesson material in the classroom is of great importance in language acquisition. The messages conveyed are likely to contain new information and, as such, are most likely to provide input at *i*+1.

The frequency of translation in the Samoan classes (18% of class time) indicates that these students are receiving a large number of identical messages in both languages during the course of the lesson. This prevalence of translation and the presence of instruction in the native language indicate that students would not have to attend to English language utterances in order to follow the lesson and to understand at least some of what is happening in class. Such students may appear to be familiar with some of the course material but be at a serious disadvantage when sitting English language examinations.

Students show a marked preference for Samoan in class, using on average twice as much Samoan as English. They typically use English when responding to the teacher, but when producing unsolicited utterances such as discussion and requests, they show a strong preference for Samoan.

There does not seem to be a significant difference in language use between teachers who have completed their training in Samoa, whether they hold a Primary Teachers Certificate (PTC) or a

Secondary Teachers Certificate (STC). Both of these groups favour Samoan over English. Teachers who have been educated outside Samoa, however, appear to prefer English to Samoan as a language of instruction.

It is clear that language mixing is a feature of the Samoan classroom, but teacher language use does not appear to correlate with student language use. There does not appear to be a correlation either between the amount of English used by the teacher and the amount of English used by the students (ρ = .090 ns) nor is there a significant correlation between the proportion of English and Samoan used by the teacher and the proportion used by the students (ρ = .121 ns). It appears that, regardless of the teacher's preference for one language over another, students tend to opt for Samoan to communicate in a mixing environment. It appears that, only where Samoan and English are compartmentalized according to language function, is there a tendency for students to communicate in English.

DISCUSSION

Mixing approaches, such as that used in Samoa, have been shown to have several major disadvantages as a method of bilingual education (Cummins and Swain 1986, Wong Fillmore 1980, Legaretta 1979).

When language mixing and translation occurs, students tend to ignore the material presented in the unfamiliar language. If similar messages are available in both languages, then there is no motivation for the student to make an effort to understand the message being presented in the second language. Wong Fillmore (1980:29) reports that in classrooms where language mixing occurs, the students learn to alternate systematically between attentiveness and inattentiveness as the teacher switches from the familiar to the unfamiliar language. Students simply stop listening when they do not understand what is being said.

A second disadvantage of the mixing approach is that neither teachers nor students have to make as much effort to encode and

decode utterances in the less familiar language. In order to assist the student to comprehend input, teachers modify their utterances in the target language to produce input which will help the acquirer understand the information which is being communicated (Henzl 1979, Long and Sato 1983, Wong Fillmore 1985). Concurrent use of both languages and frequent translation, short–circuit the process of modifying language (Wong Fillmore 1985:35). Instead of modifying target language utterances to assist the student to understand the information communicated, the teacher relies on native language utterances to given students access to meaning.

The students, gaining access to meaning through translation, do not have to build and test hypotheses in order to comprehend target language utterances. While target language utterances are available as input, there is no motivation for the utterance to become intake (Corder 1967). The target language utterances can be ignored, and it is instead the Samoan language utterances which are taken in.

It is difficult for teachers using a mixing approach to monitor the amount of time spent using each language. Bilingual individuals are frequently unaware of which language they are using at a given time or that they have shifted from one language to another. Teachers can then be exepected to be inaccurate in their perception of how much of each language is being used. This appears to be the case in Samoa, where teachers seem to be unaware of the predominance of Samoan in their officially English language classes.

Bilingual programmes which work well for language acquisition have been shown to be those in which the languages used are kept separate (Cohen and Swain 1976, Wong Fillmore 1985). Separation of languages according to specific domains, times or functions is, then, an essential element in an immersion bilingual programme such as that practiced in Samoa. While separation of languages on the basis of subject is officially the policy in Samoa, the stated policy is not being upheld in the schools.

Cummins and Swain (1986) maintain that concepts are best

learned if they are presented in the language with which the student is most familiar. Once learned, concepts can be easily transferred from one language to another, the student needing to acquire only the new label. Thus, a student who acquires the concepts involved in science or commerce in his/her native language has that concept available for use in the target language once the necessary labels are available. For Samoan Junior Secondary School students, this means that the subject matter officially taught in English could, perhaps, be acquired better in Samoan and the concept could then be transferred to English.

The Samoan education system has used English for more technical subjects such as science, mathematics and commerce, because it was felt that Samoan lacked the necessary vocabulary to teach such subjects. This study has, however, demonstrated that Samoan is being used to teach technical subjects and that the necessary concepts can, therefore, be conveyed in Samoan.

Teachers are currently resorting to circumlocutions and other devices to express the concepts, and some vocabulary development would be needed if Samoan were to function effectively as a language of instruction in the technical areas of the curriculum. This need for vocabulary development has already been recognized by some Western Samoan authorities (Lo Bianco and Wilson 1988:96). Samoan teachers, however, have demonstrated that Samoan is equal to the task of communicating academic material in a broad range of disciplines.

NOTES

1 This article reports a research study designed by Joseph Lo Bianco with the assistance of Ms T. Afamasaga, and Dr R. Gerlach. The assistance of the students at the Western Samoa Secondary Teachers College and the Principals and teachers of the Junior secondary schools is gratefully acknowledged .

2 Qualifications include diplomas from the University of the South Pacific and Bachelors degrees from New Zealand.

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